

## ALLEGED FRAUDS BY PUBLIC OFFICERS.

JULY 9, 1856.—Ordered to be printed.

JULY 10, 1856.—Referred to a Select Committee: MESSRS. BALL, KENNETT, BURNETT, KING, CADWALADER.

Whereas, in an affidavit made in January, 1854, by Cornelius Wendell, who now holds the position of printer to this body, and which affidavit reads as follows, to wit: that

“Alanson Sweet, of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, informed me that it cost him \$10,000 for the alterations made in the Mobile custom-house contract; that it was necessary to fix Mr. Young, the architect of the treasury; and that the \$10,000 thus expended would be more than doubled by the alterations he (Sweet) had thus procured to be made.

“Also, that to procure said alterations it was necessary to fix a friend of Mr. Guthrie, and that he had made the necessary arrangements to have him right.

“C. WENDELL.

“WASHINGTON, *January 14, 1854.*

“Subscribed and sworn to before me,

“J. W. BECK, *J. P.*”

it is charged that alterations in the manner of construction of the Mobile custom-house have been made by the architect and others intrusted with the construction of said building, at the instance of the contractor, and for a consideration in money; and whereas, other statements exist which tend to corroborate the same accusations, and also to specify others similar in character and in numerous instances; and whereas it is the duty of the people's representatives to inquire into the truth of such allegations, when sustained by evidence such as to render their truth probable: Therefore

*Resolved*, That there be appointed by the Speaker a select committee of five members, whose duty it shall be to inquire into the general management and expenditures connected with the public buildings or works constructed, or purchased, or in process of construction, by the United States, of whatsoever description, whether at the seat of government or elsewhere; and that said committee be authorized to send for persons and papers, and to examine witnesses touching the manner of construction and the manner of awarding contracts; whether any bribes or fees have at any time been taken by any officer in the service of the government, as a consideration for awarding any contract, or for making any changes in the original terms of any contract, or for making alterations in the plan of any work, or

for using his influence in any manner in obtaining any contract or extra compensation for any person for such work, or for being in any other manner instrumental in aiding to defraud the government; and that said committee be authorized to inquire into the capacity, as well as character for integrity, of any architect, superintendent, or other officers. And that they have power to appoint a clerk to aid in the performance of these duties; and also authorized to report, in whole or in part, at any time.

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ROOM OF THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS,  
*Washington, July 3, 1856.*

SIR: In addition to the inquiries propounded in the resolution adopted by the House of Representatives on the 26th of May last, calling on the President of the United States for information in regard to the construction of the Capitol and Post Office extensions, the committee desire the following inquiries answered, either in connexion with the response to the resolutions above referred to, or in a separate communication, as you may prefer, to wit:

The cost of marble workmanship of windows of principal story, north and south fronts, viz: the cost of the two jambs with brackets, the ornamental lintel which rests on the brackets, the pedimental head, and the inside jambs and head of each window, including setting, handling, superintendence, and every expense.

The average cost of the marble of each window as above described, and the probable amount that said windows would have cost if they had been executed according to the specifications attached to Provost, Winter & Co.'s contract.

The cost of marble workmanship of each of the east front doors, embracing the two jambs with brackets, the ornamental lintel which rests on the brackets, the cornice, and all expenses of superintendence, exclusive only of the sculptured figures intended to be placed on top.

What has been the additional cost of material in consequence of the alteration of the design of the said front doors from those mentioned in the contract of Provost, Winter & Co.?

What will be the cost of the plaster models for the sculpture on top of each front door? Who is making them? Are they completed? And, also, what will be the cost of the marble sculpture to be cut from them?

What will the plaster models for the east pediment cost, and what will be the cost of cutting them in marble?

How much are the plaster casts for the bronze front doors to cost, and how much will be the cost of the doors to be executed from them?

Are any of the inner doors to be made of bronze? If so, which doors? And how much is the modelling to cost? And how much the work to be executed from the models?

How much have the models for the Indian boy and girl cost? What has been the cost of the marble statues cut from them, and where are these statues to be placed?

What is the total amount already agreed to be paid for plaster models to Mr. Crawford, at Rome? What the amount to be paid to Mr. Powers? And, if agreements have been made with other sculptors, to what amount, what for, and where are such models to be executed?

Is any sculpture to be introduced in the extension of the Post Office building? If so, what is its character? How much is it to cost? Was it in the original design of the architect adopted by Congress? And if not, by what authority of law was it introduced?

Very respectfully,

EDWARD BALL,  
R. C. PURYEAR,  
LEMUEL TODD,  
A. E. ROBERTS,

*Members of the said committee.*

Hon. JEFFERSON DAVIS,  
*Secretary of War.*

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WAR DEPARTMENT,  
*Washington, July 5, 1856.*

GENTLEMEN: I have received your letter of the 3d instant, desiring me to furnish certain information respecting the Capitol extension and the Post Office building, in addition to that requested of the President by the resolution of the House of Representatives of May 26, either in connexion with the response to that resolution, or in a separate communication.

In reply, I have to say that it would not be competent for this department, in answering the resolution, to volunteer statements not required by its terms; and that, as the House has, by the resolution mentioned, called upon the President for certain specific information respecting the buildings in question, I prefer to make no communications upon the same subject, to be used in the House, unless required by the same authority.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JEFFERSON DAVIS,  
*Secretary of War.*

Hons. EDWARD BALL,  
R. C. PURYEAR,  
LEMUEL TODD,  
A. E. ROBERTS,

*Of the Committee on Public Buildings, H. of R.*

It is a very interesting and important question, and one which has been the subject of much discussion and controversy. The question is, whether the law of the land is the law of the people, or whether it is the law of the government. The answer to this question is, that the law of the land is the law of the people, and that the government is bound to obey it. This is the principle of the rule of law, and it is the principle upon which all free governments are based. It is the principle which makes the law of the land the law of the people, and it is the principle which makes the government the servant of the people, and not the master of them.

EDWARD HALL  
B. C. JAMES  
LEWIS TODD  
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